

Message Text

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SUBJ: BEIRUT PRESS ON MIDDLE EAST

1. IN SPITE OF FACT THAT LEBANESE MEDIA ARE ALMOST TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH LOCAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, U.S. STATEMENTS ON MIDDLE EAST CRISIS HAVE BEEN ACCORDED ADEQUATE SPACE IN NEWS COLUMNS AT LEAST. POLICY STATEMENTS ON REGIONAL SITUATION PLAYED SECOND FIDDLE TO PAROCHIAL LEBANESE ISSUES IN EDITORIAL PAGES, MAINLY BECAUSE BEIRUT PRESS NO LONGER AT LIBERTY TO PROVIDE DIVERSITY OF VIEWS AS IN PRE-CENSORSHIP DAYS.

2. PRESS REACTION HAS RANGED FROM EUPHORIC ENDORSEMENT OF STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT CAUTIONING ISRAEL ON ITS NEGOTIATING STANCE AND "PRINCIPLE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS," TO SUSPICIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD SENATOR JAVITS' SENATE FLOOR REMARKS AND SENATOR BAKER'S AND CONGRESSMAN RHODES' JOINT CRITICISM OF ADMINISTRATION'S MIDEAST POLICY, TO EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN OVER WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER'S JULY 12 NEWS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS CONSTITUTED "RETREAT" FROM PREVIOUSLY AND PUBLICLY STATED POSITIONS.

3. LEADING BEIRUT DAILY AN NAHAR FRONTPAGED JULY 13: "U.S. RETREATS FROM ITS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS. CARTER AVOID MENTIONING UNCLASSIFIED

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PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AND TALKS ABOUT AN ENTITY TO BE TIED IN WITH JORDAN AND NOT BE INDEPENDENT." WHILE OTHER BEIRUT PAPERS DID NOT LABEL PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AS "RETREAT," MOST PLAYED UP HIS POINT THAT NEW ENTITY NOT BE INDEPENDENT AND POINTEDLY STRESSED HIS PREFERENCE FOR ITS AFFILIATION WITH JORDAN.

4. U.S. WAS NOT ONLY RECIPIENT OF SUCH CRITICISM, HOWEVER.

SEVERAL BEIRUT PAPERS, ALL WITH PRO-PALESTINIAN LEANINGS, TOOK EXCEPTION TO ARAB MENTION AS WELL OF TYING IN PALESTINIAN HOMELAND WITH JORDAN. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY IKE BANNERLINED "SADAT-ARAFAT CLASH ON PALESTINIAN STATE REPORTED," EXPLAINING THAT "SADAT WANTED TO SETTLE JORDAN-PALESTINE TIES BEFORE GENEVA CONFERENCE, WHEREAS ARAFAT WANTED TO LEAVE ISSUE UNTIL AFTER ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN STATE." SIMILARLY, AL MOHARRER AND AS SAFIR PROMINENTLY FEATURED PLO SPOKESMAN'S COMMENT THAT "ANY TALK ABOUT AFFILIATION BETWEEN PALESTINIAN STATE AND ANOTHER COUNTRY, SUCH AS JORDAN, IS DEFIANCE OF PALESTINIAN CONCENSUS." SAME PAPERS ALSO DENOUNCED PRESIDENT CARTER'S IDEA OF PALESTINIAN ENTITY TIED IN WITH JORDAN AS "REVIVAL OF UNITED ARAB KINGDOM PLAN."

5. EDITORIALY, IKE CHIDED ARABS FOR "CONTINUING TO ABIDE BY THEIR MORE-BLESSED-TO-GIVE-THAN-TO-RECEIVE POLICY... ARAB COUNTRIES HAVE NOW ACCEPTED LATEST U.S.-BACKED ISRAELI DEMAND: THAT PALESTINIAN HOMELAND WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER CALLED FOR BE AN APPENDAGE OF HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN, INSTEAD OF INDEPENDENT STATE."

6. PRO-SAUDI WEEKLY AL JAOMHOUR CONCEDES THAT PRESIDENT CARTER "DID NOT RETREAT COMPLETELY FROM HIS CALL TO ESTABLISH PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. HE ONLY REPHRASED HIS CALL IN NEW SCENARIO AND TOLD JEWISH LEADERS THAT PALESTINIAN HOMELAND SHOULD BE TIED IN WITH JORDAN." BUT THEN MAGAZINE WONDERS ABOUT "SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SHIFT: HAS ENTHUSIASM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VANISHED? OR HAS ZIONIST UNCLASSIFIED

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INFLUENCE PERHAPS BEGUN TO BEAR FRUIT WITHIN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION?"

7. DISSENTING OPINION IS EXPRESSED BY ANOTHER BEIRUT WEEKLY, AD DIYAR: "WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS RETREAT ON PART OF CARTER IS NOTHING BUT TACTICS, WHICH WOULD LEAD ULTIMATELY TO OVERALL MIDEAST SETTLEMENT...CARTER'S POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST IS NOT RESULT OF MORAL CONSIDERATIONS. IT IS BASED ON NEW ASSESSMENTS, MAINLY OF OIL ELEMENT: U.S. WILL BE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON MIDEAST OIL DURING NEXT TEN YEARS."

8. AN NAHAR'S COLUMNIST MICHEL ABOU JAOUDEH, WHO DEVOTED HIS ARTICLES OF PAST THREE DAYS TO MIDDLE EAST, POINTS OUT THAT U.S. "ENJOYS FRIENDSHIP OF THREE PARTIES INVOLVED (ARABS, PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS). YET, EVEN PRESIDENT CARTER HIMSELF MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT THAT PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT REQUIRES MORE THAN FRIENDSHIP--HISTORICAL BOLDNESS."

9. ILLUSTRATING LEBANESE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE SOUTH AND CONCERN OVER ITS FATE, ANOTHER ABOU JAOUDEH COLUMN ATTRIBUTES TO PRINCE FAHD OF SAUDI ARABIA HIS HAVING POINTED OUT TO PRESIDENT CARTER THAT "SPEAKING OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED ARAB

TERRITORIES WOULD BE MEANINGLESS IF ISRAEL OCCUPIED NEW TERRITORY IN SOUTH LEBANON."

10. PARIS-BASED AL MOSTAKBAL COMMENTED ON BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: "WHETHER OR NOT BEGIN MANAGES TO CONVINCE WASHINGTON THAT HE SHOULD RETAIN WEST BANK, BEGIN'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER HAS CREATED IN MIDEAST AREA NEW CLIMATE WHICH COULD LEAD TO CATASTROPHE OF WAR. U.S. SHOULD DECIDE WHETHER IT WILL ALLOW BEGIN TO IGNITE WAR OR WHETHER IT WILL BEHAVE AS BIG, RESPONSIBLE POWER-- FOR A CHANGE."
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